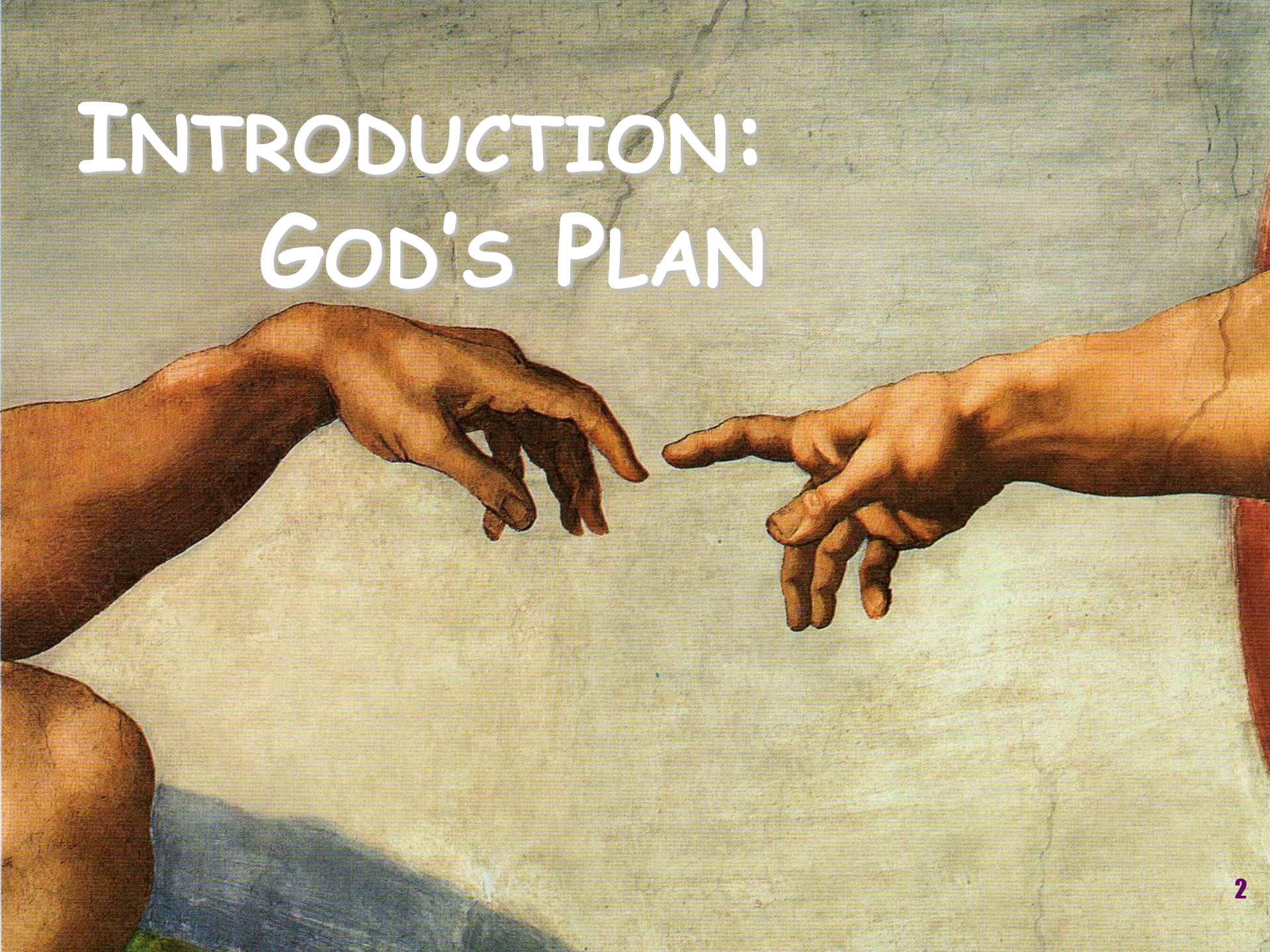




Temple and the Presence of God

INTRODUCTION: GOD'S PLAN



The Presence of God

Lord, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. You sift through my travels and my rest; with all my ways you are familiar. Even before a word is on my tongue, Lord, you know it all. Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, far too lofty for me to reach. Where can I go from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? [Psalm 139:1-7]

- † God is most high, but all near, not isolated from the world by His perfection
- † He is the Creator present in His work [Romans 1:20]
- † He is Savior, present to His People [Exodus 19:4 ff]
- † God the Father present to His Son [John 8:29]
- † The Spirit present to those He leads and for whom He intercedes [Romans 8:14,28]
- † He is present always, for He dominates time, His creation



Temple and the Presence of God

- † Temple, as the place of God's Presence, joins Covenant and Law as major realities of Sacred Scripture
- † It is a key theme that runs through both Old and New Testaments
- † There, along the paths of Scripture, we encounter God's Presence: how He has chosen to reveal Himself, to dwell with men

“...a light silent sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, Why are you here, Elijah?” [1 Kings 19:12-13]




Temple & God's Plan

- † God from the very outset destined man to a supernatural union with Him
- † God's plan for humanity can be described in terms of a temple built of living stones
- † His whole purpose is to make us, created in His image, a living spiritual temple in which He not only dwells but to which He communicates Himself and in turn receives worship

“...like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” [1 Peter 2:5].

Temple & God's Plan

- † God's plan embraces all of history and the world
- † It is a story with a beginning and an end, one told through Sacred Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation
- † It is the story of God's increasingly generous and deeper Presence among us
- † Its stages form a process of development; beginning with God's creative act of love and ending with the sharing of His heavenly Presence



"I see four men unbound and unhurt, walking in the fire, and the fourth looks like a son of God" [Daniel 3:92].

Temple & God's Plan

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, He spoke to us through a Son, whom He made heir of all things and through whom He created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of His being, and who sustains all things by His mighty word. When He had accomplished purification from sins, He took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." [Hebrews 1:1-3].

Temple and the Presence of God



- ✠ In the Old Testament we encounter this fundamental symbolism where Temple is a sign of the Presence of God among His People
- ✠ As we will see, this is a provisional sign to be fulfilled in a new Temple: the Body of Christ and His Church...more about this later



Temple and the Presence of God

The Temple Progression:

- ✦ The Cosmic Temple
- ✦ The Temple of Moses
- ✦ The Temple of Christ and the Prophets
- ✦ The Temple of the Church - the Mystical Temple
- ✦ The Heavenly Temple

Temple and the Presence of God

- † Each successive Temple, from the Cosmic through the Heavenly, marks an advance from that which precedes it
- † Yet each not only surpasses but also *preserves* its predecessor



Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place [Matthew 5:17-20].



Temple and the Presence of God

- † Each stage moves toward an increasing inwardness
- † ...from things to persons
- † ...from fleeting moments of God's Presence to a lasting Presence
- † ...from the simple Presence of His action to a vital gift of inward word, joy, and peace

“so that God may be all in all”
[1 Corinthians 15:28].

“...its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb” [Revelation 21:22].




Temple and the Presence of God

For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made [Romans 1:19-20]

- ✚ Among pagans, temple is a sacred place where divinity is worshipped and thought to make itself present, foreshadowing true Revelation
- ✚ Pagans believed that divinity existed somehow beyond the world but temple enabled man to communicate with the world of the gods

Temple and the Presence of God



The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands nor is He served by human hands because He needs anything. Rather it is He who gives to everyone life and breath and everything...so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for Him and find Him, though indeed He is not far from any one of us. For 'In Him we live and move and have our being...'
[Acts 17:24-25, 27-28].



Temple and the Presence of God

- ✝ We will meet the “known” God of the Beginning and the “hidden” God of Sinai
- ✝ To the Trinity’s dwelling in the Incarnation of Jesus
- ✝ To Jesus’ dwelling in His Mystical Body, and in its every member
- ✝ To His Presence in the sacramental, eschatological Temple

I. THE COSMIC TEMPLE



The Cosmic Temple

- † The Universe is Created by a Personal, Transcendent God
- † *Holy*: In the beginning all creation comes from the Hands of God and is holy
- † *Dependent*: All of Creation - all space, all time, all things in His sight - are dependent on God

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good [Genesis 1:31].





The Cosmic Temple

- † God is present in His creation
- † God's house - His Temple - is the entire universe, the Cosmic Temple
- † The divine Presence confers on the entire Cosmos a sacramental value
- † The earthly Paradise is Nature in a state of grace

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed [Genesis 2:8].

Presence and Innocence



- † Before the Fall, an innocence pervades Creation
- † In Eden God is present; He speaks with the man and gives him commands
- † God's creatures are holy, expecting man to lead them

The man gave names to all the tame animals, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals [Genesis 2:20].



The Fall Distorts All

- † By disobedience and pride man and woman violate God's command
- † They profane themselves and the world, imposing sacrilege
- † God's creation, man's own body, and human culture are all distorted by sin

We all long for Eden, and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most human, is still soaked with the sense of exile [J.R.R. Tolkien].

There are some desires that are not desirable [G.K. Chesterton].

Man Profanes Himself

- † Man misuses that which can serve him, transforming them into instruments of hatred
- † Man transforms the body, in its awesome visible glory, into an instrument of selfish pleasure
- † Man perverts the blessings of human culture, turning away from the “cult” that gives it meaning

Creation Judges

- † Patterns of Nature remind us of God's power and are signs of hope
- † The perfection of creation is a judgment against man and his sinfulness
- † God cares for His creation [Jeremiah 8:7; Matthew 6:26] even as man sets aside God's Word



The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims the works of his hands [Psalm 19:1].



God Remains Present

- † Rebellion causes suffering, the resistance of matter to human will
- † Even after the Fall, God still manifests His Presence in the world and to men
- † The whole of nature is still a temple consecrated to Him

Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool [Isaiah 66:1].

He reveals deep and hidden things and knows what is in the darkness, for the light dwells with him [Daniel 2:22].



Man's Universal Need

All cultures, high and low, have certain characteristics:

- † God's presence in the natural world
- † An awareness of God as supernatural & transcendent
- † The desire for deliverance, salvation, eternal life

"Primitive man believes no less firmly...in the existence of a spiritual world upon which the visible world and the life of man are dependent"
[Christopher Dawson].

Worship and Sacrifice

"Sometimes it was necessary to keep the face wet with tears so that the spirits would pity the sufferer and grant his request. 'I am a poor man. Pity me,' is a constant prayer. 'Have nothing,' the medicine man taught, and the spirits will come to you" [Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*].

- † Primitive people had an obscure, confused intuition of transcendent being
- † Religious aims were usually practical; e.g., survival; success in the hunt and war
- † But the means were distinctly religious: prayer, meditation, asceticism, withdrawal, humility, faith...
- † Attitudes that recall Jesus' words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the ground, while Abel, for his part, brought the fatty portion of the firstlings of his flock [Genesis 4:3-4].

The Lord appeared to Abram and said: To your descendants I will give this land. So Abram built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him [Genesis 12:7].

Man's Response

In Biblical history the earliest rites are those found among nomads and semi-nomads:

- ✝ The erection of altars
- ✝ The invocation of the divine name
- ✝ The offering of animals or products of the soil
- ✝ There is no fixed place, but sacrifices are offered where God manifests Himself

God Walks With Men

- † The time of the Patriarchs retains a semblance of the paradisaal grace
- † Although corruption ruled the earth, God remains present and “walks” with Enoch and those who are righteous
- † God “walks” with Noah, talking with him of His plans

Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord [Genesis 6:8].



The Patriarchs Worship



- ✝ The early Hebrews of the patriarchal period have no temple
- ✝ They have sacred places - Bethel (House of God), Beersheba (Well of the Oath), Shechem (shoulder) - where they “invoked the Lord by name”

From there he [Abram] moved on to the hill country east of Bethel, pitching his tent with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. He built an altar there to the Lord and invoked the Lord by name [Genesis 12:8].



God Reveals Himself

- † God reveals Himself first to privileged souls (the Patriarchs), assuring them of His Presence
- † With them He makes a covenant [Genesis 9:9; 17; 28:15...]
- † Ultimately He reveals His name [Exodus 3:14] and its meaning
- † He promises His Presence: Emmanuel [Isaiah 7:14, 8:10]

God answered: I will be with you; and this will be your sign that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will serve God at this mountain [Exodus 3:12].



Early Names of God

- † All Semitic languages use “El” as a root form of their word for God
- † Abraham uses “El Shaddai” [Gen 17:1] and “El Elyon” [Gen 14:22], both meaning “God the Most High”
- † Abraham also uses “El olam” (God of ancient days) in Gen 21:33
- † The plural of “El,” “Elohim,” is also found in the Old Testament
- † For the Church Fathers it reveals the Trinity; e.g., the Three who visit Abraham, whom he address as “Lord” [Gen 18]

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Say this to the sons of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you” [Exodus 3:14].

God's Friendship With Abraham



And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them he ran from the tent door to meet

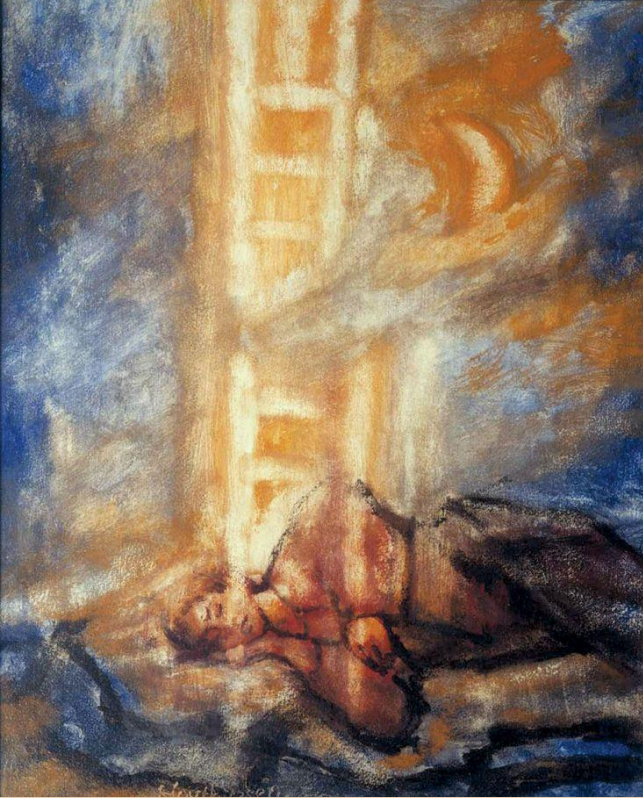
them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My Lord, if I have found favor in your sight do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree" [Genesis 18:1-4].



God and Abraham

- † With God Abraham has what the Greeks call “parrhesia”; i.e., he speaks boldly yet asks forgiveness for his candor [see Genesis 18:22-33]
- † God is present to Abraham and the whole of nature remains a Temple consecrated to Him
- † Springs, trees, rough altar stones - all are fragments of Paradise fit for sacrifices

Abram moved his tents and went on to settle near the oak of Mamre, which is at Hebron. There he built an altar to the Lord God [Genesis 13:18].



God and Jacob

- † We encounter the awesomeness of God's Presence throughout Genesis
- † Overcome by God's Presence, Jacob names this place "Bethel" - the House of God

Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it!" He was afraid and said: "How awesome this place is! This is nothing else but the house of God, the gateway to heaven!" Early the next morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head, set it up as a sacred pillar, and poured oil on top of it. He named that place Bethel..." [Genesis 28:16-19].



God of the Patriarchs

- † The experiences of the Patriarchs are a “type” of the real Presence of God among us
- † As a type it is marked by two characteristics: transcendence and proximity, in a sense, Creator and Lover
- † The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob reveals Himself as *El Shaddai*, the Most High God [Genesis 35:11]
- † But He is also “the God of my salvation”, who looks on me as if I were infinitely precious to Him [Exodus 15:2]

“...there is no Presence of God unless God intends there to be one, unless He makes demands of us, unless too He puts us to the proof of suffering... the theme of God as testing those who are near to Him is one that constantly recurs in the Scriptures” [Yves Congar]

Signs of God's Presence



- ✝ God “awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this [His Son's] coming” [CCC 522]

“...my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel” [Luke 2:29-35].

In past generations He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet He did not leave Himself without witness, for He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness [Acts 14:16-17].



Distorted in Paganism

† Distorted and corrupted, pagan polytheism contains traces of God's Presence

Do not make idols for yourselves. You shall not erect a carved image or a sacred stone for yourselves, nor shall you set up a carved stone for worship in your land; for I, the Lord, am your God [Leviticus 26:1-2].

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he grew exasperated at the sight of the city full of idols [Acts 17:16].



Nihilism of Idolatry

- † Idols, empty and lifeless, can do neither evil nor good
- † To the idolater the silence of idols is no problem; it makes no demands
- † Idolatry is loyalty to nothing, to emptiness, to death...not to the promise of the covenant; it is the mother of all sins

We proclaim to you good news that you should turn from these idols to the living God, 'who made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them' [Acts 14:15].

Seek God's Presence

- † The wise among men continued to seek signs of God's Presence in the Cosmic Temple
- † Early in the Gospel we see this seeking in the heavens by the shepherds and Magi
- † The Magi rejected the corruption of paganism and found the revealed God first in heavenly signs [Matthew 2]



Cosmic Temple

- † In the Cosmic Temple man doesn't live in his own house, but in the House of God [Bethel]
- † There all is holy, heavy with sacramental mystery
- † Primitive sacrifice simply recognizes God's sovereignty, who takes the first fruits and leaves the rest for man

...you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land the Lord, your God, is giving you; put them in a basket and go to the place which the Lord, your God, will choose as the dwelling place for his name [Deuteronomy 26:2].

Creation Awaits...

- † By sacramental use man confers on visible things their supreme dignity as effective sources of grace
- † Water purifies; oil empowers and anoints [2 Kings 5:10; 1 Samuel 16:13]
- † Man mediates using elements of the visible universe over which God lovingly watches [Matthew 28:19]

For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God [Rom 8:19].

“When the prophets are silent and society no longer possesses any channel of communication with the divine world, the way to the lower depths is still open and man's frustrated spiritual powers will find their outlet in the unlimited will to power and destruction”

[Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture*].

“Cult-less” Culture

- ✦ God is present in Creation, present in all times for He dominates time
- ✦ His spiritual Presence as loving life-giver envelops man, His creature
- ✦ But when the creature ignores God Presence, ceases to communicate with and worship Him, the culture degenerates and destroys itself




Jesus Restores

- ✝ Suffering was unknown in Paradise and will be unknown in Paradise Regained
- ✝ Jesus already restores - raising the dead, healing the sick, mastering wind and wave
- ✝ But the world tries to hide God from us, confining us to a material world

“If I seek to rediscover the joys of Paradise, to move at ease amid created things, I must give them back their proper meaning” [Jean Cardinal Danielou].

We Join God in His Work of Restoration

- † Created things were blessed with a noble mission as servants of humanity
- † They await, unchanged, in the brotherly innocence in which they were created
- † We must recover the purity of our glance so we see heaven's light in God's creatures



A clean heart
create for me,
God; renew
within me a
steadfast spirit
[Psalm 51:12].

"None but the pure of heart knows the perfume
of the rose" [Paul Claudel, *Figures et paraboles*].

God Gives All

Yes mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the mother of God, and all things are mine; and God himself is mine and for me because Christ is mine and all for me.

What do I ask then and what do I seek once this is all mine and all for me? Yours is all of this, and all is for you. Do not engage yourself in something less, nor pay heed to the crumbs which fall from your Father's table. Go forth and exult in your Glory! Hide yourself in it and rejoice, and you will obtain the supplications of your heart.

[St. John of the Cross, Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love]



Cosmic Temple Today

- † Divine Presence is manifested and experienced in the Cosmos, which remains holy
- † God's creation merits being surrounded with religious awe
- † Lifted up by the knowledge that God created in His love, we can do nothing but extend that love to all

"Man, do not pride yourself on your superiority to the animals, for they are without sin, while you, with all your greatness, you defile the earth wherever you appear and leave an ignoble trail behind you - and that is true, alas, for almost every one of us!" [Fyodor Dostoyevski].

Cosmic Temple Today

✝ God has provided us with natural resources, and made us stewards of His Creation

The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it [Genesis 2:15].

“A Christian who doesn't safeguard creation, who doesn't make it flourish, is a Christian who isn't concerned with God's work, that work born of God's love for us” [Pope Francis].



The Temple of Sinai

- ✚ God reveals Himself by Name and instructs His People on how He should be worshipped
- ✚ He provides them with a “blueprint” for His Sanctuary, His dwelling among His People
- ✚ It becomes a figure for the glorious, Personal dwelling to come

“I AM has sent me to you...The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you” [Exodus 3:14-15].